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NET BALL

NET BALL

PLAY AND TACTICS
FOR
CLUBS AND SCHOOLS

By
D. M. WILKIE

MILL FIELD, BROMHAM
BEDFORD

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NET BALL

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE GAME

The Game of Net Ball is most frequently played between two teams each consisting of seven players, though it is possible to play with five or nine players in each team. The size generally adopted for the court is 100 feet by 50 feet; this is frequently reduced to 80 feet by 40 feet for school courts because many schools possessed hard tennis courts before they thought of playing Net Ball, and though the length could often be made full-size, sufficient width is usually lacking. Other measurements of the court and details for marking it out will be found in the diagram on page 2 of the Rules Book.

After the opposing captains have tossed for the choice of goal or first centre pass, the players take their stand as shown diagrammatically on page 17 of the Rules Book, and the centre player, who has gained the first centre pass as a result of the toss, passes the ball by one of the methods laid down in Rule 11 and in accordance with Rule 9. The ball is passed, preferably diagonally across the court until it reaches the hands of

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shooter or attack inside the goal-circle. This player then attempts a shot at goal (Rule 10).

Supposing the ball is intercepted by the opponents, then it is passed by them in the opposite direction, and towards the goal into which they are playing, either till a shot is made for that goal, or until the ball is intercepted by one of the side first mentioned, or until the game is stopped for infringement of rules, or for the ball being temporarily out of play over a line, etc. This, then, is roughly the idea of the game. As long as a player remains on-side (Rule 16 for off-side) she may receive the ball any number of times from any of the other players in the passage of the ball from end to end of the court, and she may move anywhere within the limits defined for her in Rule 16.

The game should be an exceedingly fast one, especially when it is played on a hard court, but it is a mistake to attempt to make it really speedy until throwing is accurate, catching certain and foot-work neat.

[The Rules Book mentioned is the 1932–33 edition of the Rules of the Game of Net Ball as revised by the Ling Association, and adopted as the official rules of the All-England Women's Net Ball Association.]

CHAPTER II

THE COURT

Courts should be level, well-drained and free from obstructions on all sides. Often a court is marred by a wall or a paling being in close proximity to one side of it. Sometimes it is even impossible for the ball to go out of play on one side of the court. This is a great handicap, especially to a visiting team; there should be a clear space of at least two yards entirely round the limits of the court, for it should be possible to use the edges of the court for play; if there are obstructions players instinctively avoid them and the game then tends to become congested. It is, of course, ideal to have the sky as a background for the goal ring when shooting from any point of the circle, but this is not often possible. The length of the court should run North and South, so that the shooters have to face the sun as little as possible when shooting during the afternoon throughout the Net Ball season.

The court should be so clearly marked that it is possible to discover, without loss of time when playing, whether or not one has overstepped a line; only a swift glance should be necessary for Goal-shooter or

Attack to ascertain her position with regard to the shooting circle.

The goal posts must be vertical, and bases, if such are necessary, should be as flat as possible and heavy enough to ensure their remaining in position throughout any match. Most circle players prefer to play with the type of post that fits into a socket in the ground. With this type, it is essential that the post fit the socket perfectly, so that there is only the slightest amount of sway or twist when the post or ring is hit by the ball. It is doubtful if a really satisfactory goal ring (from which the net is suspended) has yet been invented, but makers of games apparatus are aware of this deficiency and are experimenting to find a satisfactory model. The ring must always be horizontal and should remain steady when hit by the ball; often one finds one must shoot into rings which sag towards the court, or tilt towards a side line. It is very difficult for a practised shooter to accommodate herself to such conditions, and these rather tend to encourage the haphazard player.

As the game is faster and in many ways better when played on a hard court, clubs who play on grass are advised to make really sustained efforts and even, if necessary, strenuous agitation to obtain hard grounds or to get their grass court converted into a hard one. Nowadays authorities are not quite as prone as they were to refuse such a request without duly considering it; they

know that hard courts are a fairly sound business proposition where Tennis is concerned, and, if Net Ball players will point out how easy it is to have courts marked with red lines for Net Ball and white lines for Tennis without either game suffering the least confusion, then headway may be made.

It is most important that the foundations for a hard court should be properly laid, and it is a waste of money to economise over foundations. If a firm that makes a speciality of this work has the matter in hand, the essential points for its efficient lay-out will probably be considered, but if a local builder with little experience of hard courts is employed, it is in the long run a saving of money to consult an architect.

Net Ball, when played indoors, is usually exceedingly fast, but the game tends to become restricted because so few halls or gymnasia are large enough to permit of a full-sized court. However, a good deal of useful practice may be done indoors on winter evenings, and many city clubs (especially in London) play regularly in this way. It should be remembered, when marking an indoor court, that the length of the centre line never varies, nor does the radius of the shooting circle ; this latter must be made 16 feet in radius, even though it means that no space is left between the shooting circle and the side lines of the court.

CHAPTER III

QUALITIES OF A GOOD PLAYER

Speed; control of the ball and of body; ability to take in the positions of every player at a glance, and then to think and act quickly; ability to become one-seventh of a team.

1. Speed.

In Net Ball a player must not only be able to accomplish short sprints in the shortest possible time, and therefore get quickly off the mark in starting, but must also be able to change from attack to defence and vice versa without the slightest delay. Hence it is obvious that the alert position, with weight forward, knees slightly bent and heels off the ground, has to be maintained almost continuously. In a game such as Net Ball, which is played in a fairly small space with a fairly small number of players, all changes are essentially rapid.

In attack, the preliminary dodge must be followed immediately by the swiftest of sprints. In defence, the opponent's dodging and sprinting must be followed so closely that she is kept "covered," i.e. the player marking her must all the time endeavour to keep in a position to intercept any pass sent to her.

2. Control of the Ball and of Body.

Every player should be able to obtain possession of the ball with complete mastery of it whenever she is within reaching distance of it with either hand. She should be capable of obtaining the ball with either arm completely extended, whether on the jump or with body bent forward, sideways or even backwards. It must not be thought that dexterity of arms is the sole factor necessary for the accomplishment of ball-control; very much depends on the ability of the player to maintain her balance through correct use of the feet, so that the maximum amount of help is given to the body and the arms in order to make a successful catch, supposing the player is catching the ball other than on the jump. For instance, Attack in her efforts to get free has been forced to run to the edge of the circle; if now she can so balance her body (with feet apart) that she is able to reach about 4 feet outside the circle, she will probably be able to receive a pass, *and* remain in a position to shoot, before Defence can get across to intercept the ball. When a player receives the ball on the jump, spring and agility are needed for the leap, and body control combined with agility for the landing, to ensure this being neat, steady and hence in contact with no other player. Skill in leaping high, vertically or forward, with arm (or arms) outstretched to obtain the ball, is something

which can and should be acquired by players if it is not theirs to use at will ; this spring (a very beautiful thing if well done) is characteristic of a game such as Net Ball, in which the player's body is not cramped or hampered in any way by having to carry about some implement such as a stick or bat.

Players are reminded here that the ball, when obtained by a one-arm reach, must immediately be controlled by the other hand ; and although, in all throwing, the ball is propelled mainly by one arm, wrist and hand, the other hand should retain contact as a support as long as possible.

The throw should at all times be perfectly controlled. One often sees shooters practising shots for goal for minutes on end, while the entire remainder of the fourteen about to take part in the match or practice stand round as a fielding chorus. They should provide themselves with extra balls and practise their passing so that they are able to gauge within a few inches where a pass will go, how high it will be and of what strength, and they should practise their throwing in such a way that they are able to get away from their throwing point in order to get into position to receive again without any delay.

All this has to be done in the game itself without the slightest interference or contact with players of the opposite side—while one is getting free to receive a pass ; all touching

off one's immediate opponent (i.e. using her as a prop or fulcrum from which to obtain power to get off the mark) must be avoided ; all charging through a player into a free space (i.e. charging swiftly past a player and coming into contact with her so that her progress is definitely impeded) is debarred ; all shouldering of the opposite side at the moment of receiving is out of the question. In the change to defence play when the ball has passed to the opponents, there must be no pushing on drawing level with one's opponent, no falling into her if she pulls up abruptly, and of course no holding her either with hand, or with arm across her body in any way. Naturally this neatness of play, which is dependent on good body control, is not attained in a moment, but the highest standard must be aimed at from the very beginning of play, both with adult clubs and with the smallest folk in schools.

3. Ability to Take in the Positions of Every Player at a Glance.

Some people in the world never look beyond their noses, and if these people happen to take up Net Ball, unless they speedily reform, they are a trial to their side. Players must learn to be conscious of the positions of almost all the other players on the field practically without looking at them, and they must aim at seeing not only who is able to get free for the next pass, but also where

will be the most advantageous direction to send that pass in order that a goal may be scored as soon as possible. It is not really necessary for the player with the ball to know what is happening behind her, as long as she knows the rough plan of those players between her and the goal into which her side is shooting, for backward passing (i.e. passing in which the ball travels farther away from the goal one is attacking) should always be looked upon as an emergency tactic only.

4. Think and Act Quickly.

All players must decide quickly where to pass and then act upon the decision immediately. It is very important to keep one's own side as fresh as possible, and there is nothing so wearing (and indeed disheartening) as to play with a person who does not realise when members of her side are free, or about to be in a position to receive a pass, but stands with the ball for fully two and a half seconds while her side, having by this time become marked, proceeds to get free again. There are just one or two occasions when a hold up of this kind is an advantage—e.g. when a team's usual passing is extremely quick and short, in anxious moments they may be saved from infringing the rule about running with the ball if one of the centres, realising the danger, pauses as long as is allowable before passing the ball—but long pauses are only to be encouraged for the use

of beginners and of children who are apt to throw wildly instead of finding one of their own side to whom to pass.

5. Ability to Become One-Seventh of a Team.

There is less room for the individual in Net Ball than in most other team games. Every move must happen so quickly that it is essential for each player to combine easily with all the other members of her team—she must know their pace, their good points, their failings—in fact all their habits; constant practice with different people assists greatly in developing the power of observation which makes a player capable of melting into a team so that she immediately becomes part of it.

CHAPTER IV

QUALITIES OF A GOOD TEAM

Complete understanding of the rules of the game; the start of the game; knowledge of the play in all places on the court; combination; absence of weak places; variety of tactics; absence of excitability; good staying powers and determination.

1. The Rules of the Game.

If every player would make it her aim in life to become a good umpire, then play would improve almost instantly in every club. Only through complete understanding of the rules of a game can the fundamental ideas of that game be reached and its true significance be grasped.

If "Rules of the Game of Net Ball" as revised by the Ling Association is perused at intervals in conjunction with "Hints to Umpires" (published by the All-England Women's Net Ball Association) a good deal will be accomplished towards getting familiar with the head-work of the game. Discussion of rules and of play helps greatly in gaining a wider and more thorough knowledge.

2. The Start of the Game.

Excluding backward passing, i.e. passing which does not bring the ball nearer the goal into which a team is shooting and therefore only employed as an emergency measure, there are at least eight useful centre passes which may be made at the start. Teams should aim to score a goal in two passes from the start—this is perfectly possible when the initial pass goes to Goal-shooter or Attack, highly probable when it goes to Attacking-centre, and possible (but much less likely) when it goes to Defending-centre. Nevertheless, all these passes should be employed throughout the game in whatever order the Centre player deems fit, and of course any number of others that are found to be profitable. The more the opponents are kept guessing as to which pass is going to be used, the more possibility there is of the pass being successful. There is, however, really little to be gained in sending the initial pass to Defence or Goal-keeper. It is advisable for the Centre to arrange a code of signals with the other members of the team so that, when the whistle is blown at the start and after each goal, there shall be absolutely no delay. It is possible to arrange signs by means of eyes, hands or feet, or two or more of these in combination. It should be possible to vary these during the second half of the game, supposing it is thought that the opponents have deciphered the code.

Suggestions for passes at the start of the game:—

A.—Passes to Goal-shooter.

(1) Goal-shooter, immediately the whistle is blown, gets free *outside* the circle and to her left (i.e. away from Attack). She receives the ball from the Centre and passes to Attack, who has meantime got uncovered *inside* the circle preferably in her favourite spot for shooting. Meantime Attack and Defence Centres are ready on either side of the circle backing up this attacking movement in case Attack has been unable to get free or has received the ball outside the circle instead of inside it. Shooter places herself under the goal ring in a position to receive the ball if Attack fails to score. (*See* Fig. 1.)

(2) On whistle, Goal-shooter dashes straight forward and receives the ball just outside the front of the circle. She passes immediately to the Attack, who has got uncovered by rushing to the side of the circle opposite to where she stands at the start. Meantime Attack and Defence Centres are ready again on either side of the circle to back up this attacking movement, and Shooter again places herself under the goal ring in a position to receive the ball if Attack fails to score. (*See* Fig. 2.)

B.—Passes to Attack.

(1) On the whistle, Attack runs forward towards the Centre, receives the pass and

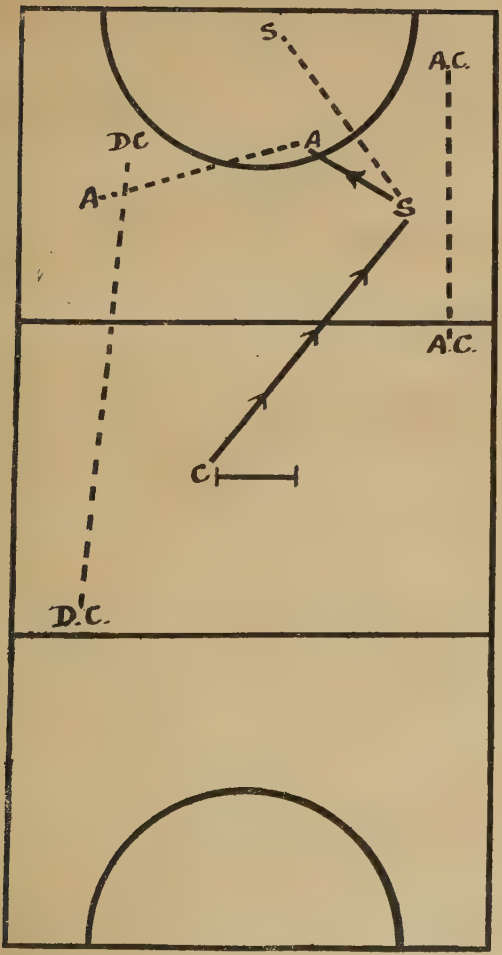

FIGURE 1.

In each case the flight of the ball is indicated by a firm line and the tracks of the players are indicated by dotted lines.

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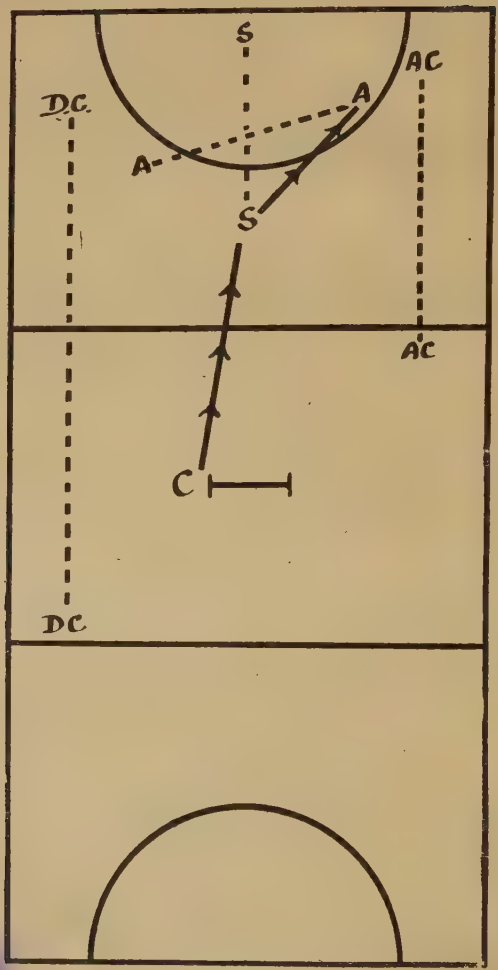

FIGURE 2.

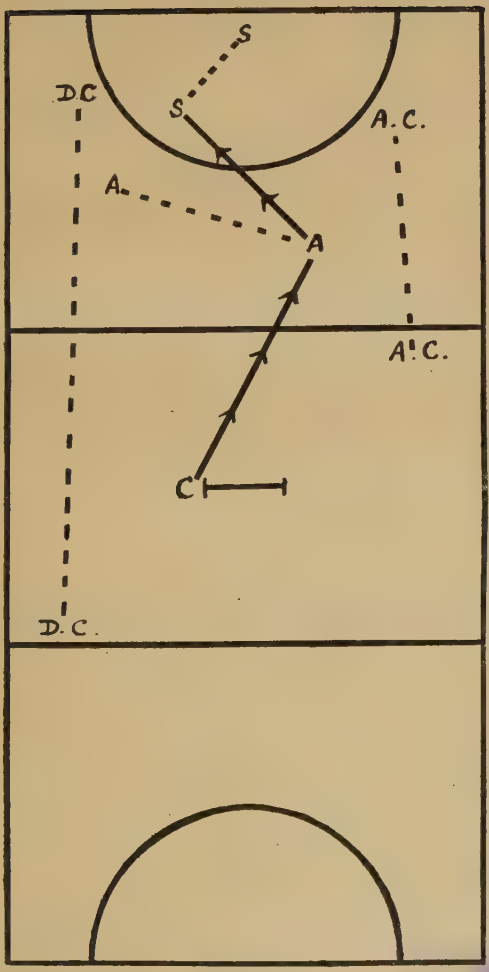

FIGURE 3.

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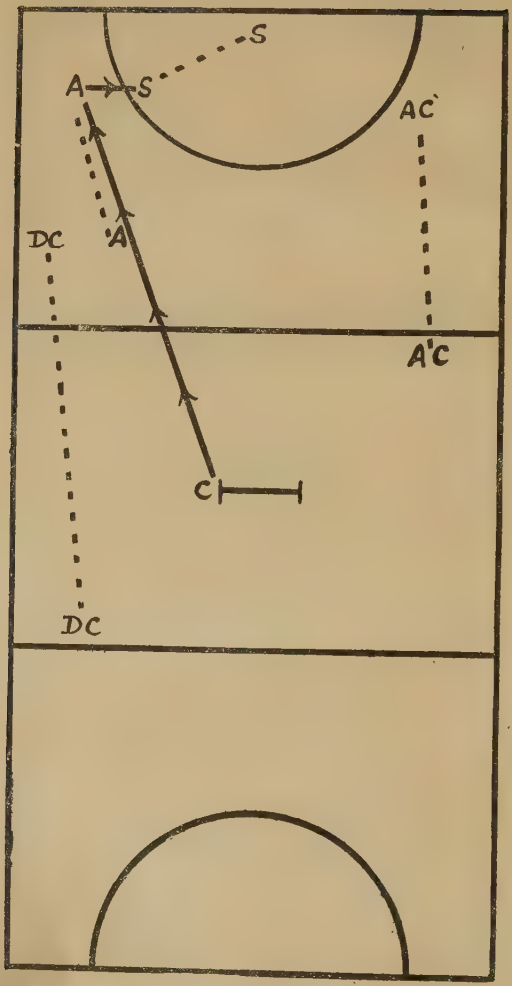

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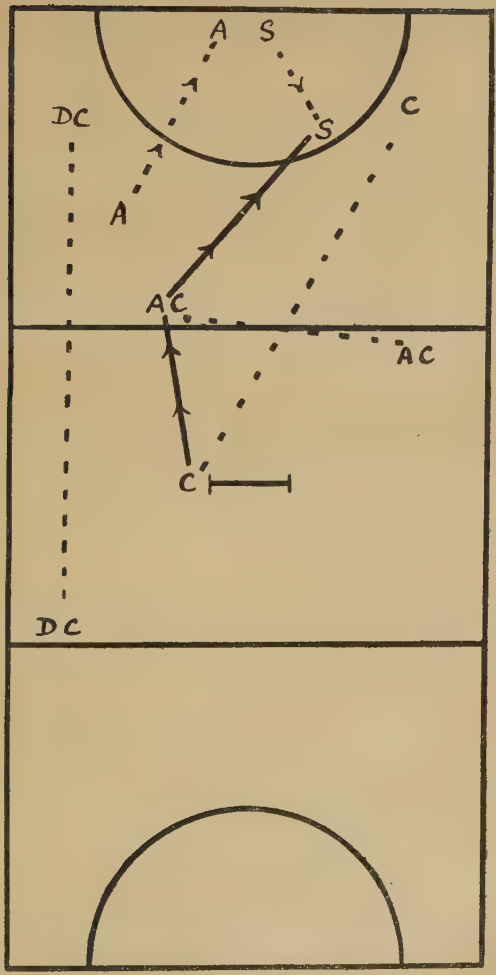

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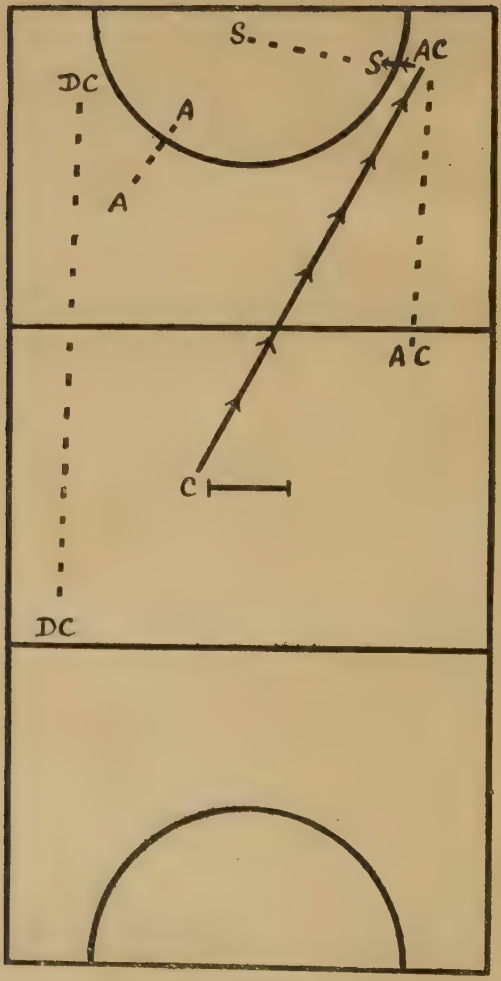

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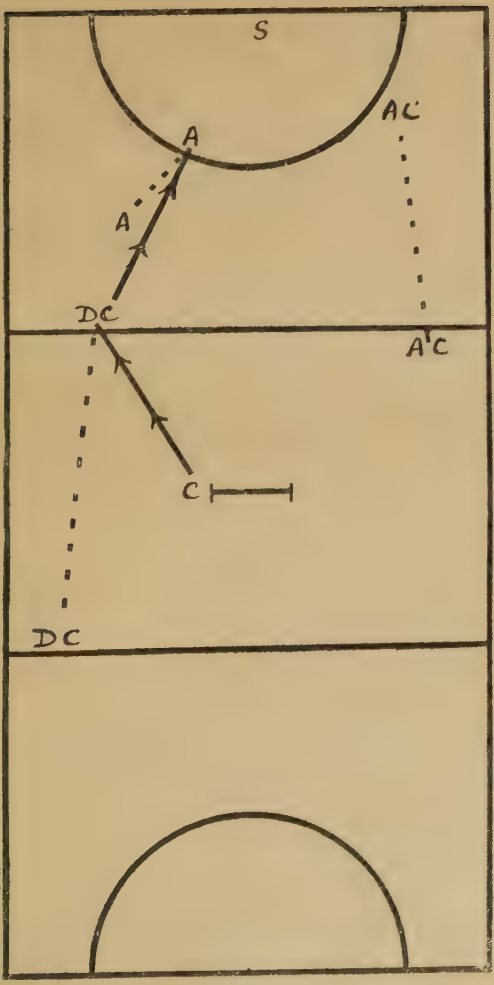

FIGURE 7.

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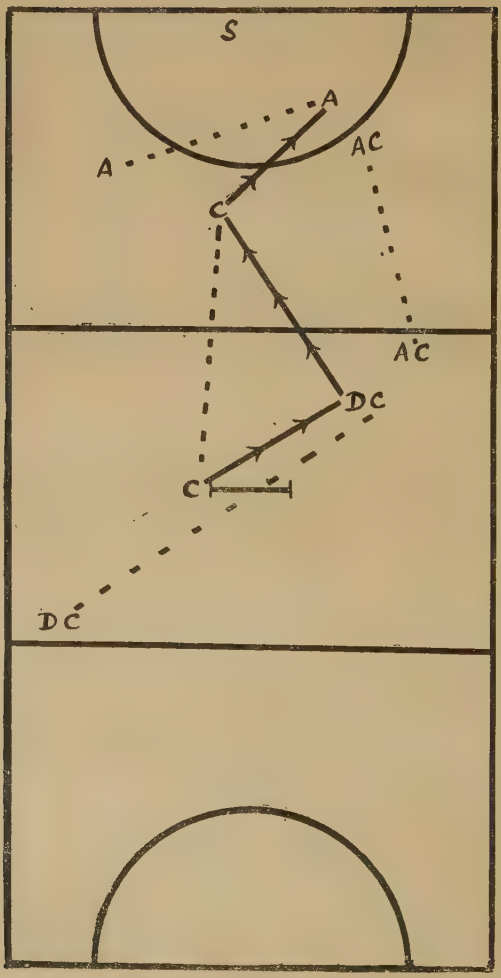

FIGURE 8.

sends it to Shooter, who has endeavoured to become free in the circle in her favourite spot for shooting. Meantime Attack and Defence Centres are ready on either side of the circle to back up the attack and Attack is ready under the goal ring in a position to receive the ball if Shooter fails to score. (*See* Fig. 3.)

(2) On the whistle, Attack runs away from the Centre and towards the goal-line, receives the pass and sends it to Shooter, who is by now unmarked just inside the circle and close to the Attack. Meantime Attack and Defence Centres back up on either side as usual and Attack places herself in position under the goal ring to receive the ball if Shooter fails to score. This is not a very safe move because the initial pass can scarcely ever be sent except over the head of an opponent, and it is not good to run this risk often. (*See* Fig. 4.)

C.—Passes to Attack Centre.

(1) On the whistle, Attack Centre runs across the court, receives the ball from the Centre, who immediately runs into the space vacated by the Attack Centre. If possible the Attack Centre passes to the Shooter or Attack in the circle, otherwise she passes either to Defence Centre or, better, to the Centre, who then endeavours to find a circle player. (*See* Fig. 5.)

(2) On the whistle, Centre sends a strong high pass to Attack Centre, who has run into

the extreme corner of the court. Shooter runs towards Attack Centre and receives the pass from her just inside the circle. If Attack Centre and Centre are really quick there should be no risk of an opponent intercepting this pass, but it needs to be such a long pass that it should be practised a great deal before it is attempted in match play. Centre and Defence Centre place themselves near the circle to be ready for emergencies, and Attack places herself in position under the goal ring to receive the ball if Shooter fails to score. (*See* Fig. 6.)

D.—Passes to Defence Centre.

(1) On whistle, Defence Centre gets free by running as far as possible down her side-line and receives the centre pass when she is nearer the goal which she is attacking than the Centre herself. Meantime the Attack and Shooter, knowing that the Defence Centre needs the side-line to herself, have occupied this time in getting unmarked in the circle. The Centre must practise this pass innumerable times with the Defence Centre and must guard against removing one of her feet from toeing the return crease while sending the pass. If this tactic can be accomplished speedily and with absolutely clean catching, it is remarkably useful. Centre and Attack Centre are ready, after the initial pass, to back up this attack. (*See* Fig. 7.)

(2) On whistle, Defence Centre endeavours

to get free across the court, and receives the centre pass when she is about level with the Centre, who must feint a pass towards the goal, in order to get the opposing Centre out of the way for her cross-pass to Defence Centre. It is equally advantageous to send the next pass to Centre (who has meanwhile moved towards the goal) or Attack Centre and thence to Goal-shooter or Attack *in* the circle. Whichever of these receives the ball proceeds to shoot while the other places herself under the ring in position to receive the ball supposing it should be a mis-shot. Defence Centre returns to her side of the court and all three Centres place themselves in position round the circle to back up the attack. (*See* Fig. 8.)

3. The Play in all Places on the Court.

A.—Goal-shooter and Attack.

The chief work of these players is to score goals. However well the other five members of the team are playing, games cannot be won unless the Shooter and Attack are able to net the ball ; therefore it is essential that these two players should keep steady and controlled. They should leave all mid-field passing to their Centre players and themselves practise the art of getting free inside the circle with the minimum amount of exertion and loss of time. They must have the position of the circle and the exact curve of the bounding line so impressed on their

minds that almost by instinct they keep inside the circle even supposing they are finding difficulty in getting unmarked. It is often quite useful to dodge outside the court, i.e. behind the goal-line, when endeavouring to throw off the Defence. Another tactic which is useful to have in reserve in case Defences are marking very thoroughly is to feint dodge forward and towards the Centre who has the ball, then run as fast as possible away from this Centre and with back to her; she, alive to this manœuvre, sends a high drop pass over the head of both Defence and Shooter, and this is one other occasion on which it is at all pardonable for a player to send a pass when there is an opponent between her and the member of her own side to whom she is passing.

The most difficult thing that Attack and Goal-shooter must learn to do is combine with each other so that they never crowd together in one part of the circle, but keep well separated. Such combination, by reason of the small area of the circle, is not an easy matter and is only successfully accomplished by two players who know each other's play extremely well.

Every Shooter and every Attack should be able to shoot and should feel at home in shooting from any point within the circle. No point is impossible (under ordinary conditions) for a successful shot, now that a player, if she receives the ball when

she is immediately under the ring, may move one foot in any direction. If either Shooter or Attack feels, or has proved, by missing her shots, that she is "off her game," then, and only then, must she pass to her partner. Normally, as soon as Shooter or Attack receives the ball, with both feet inside the circle, she must attempt a shot for goal, and this should be emphasised with every kind of player, however young or old she may be. The shot has now been made ; if it is netted, well and good ; if not, the partner has, while the shot was being made, placed herself in the best possible position near the goal-post to obtain the ball in the event of a mis-shot, remembering that she must do literally everything in her power to get that ball, and that she loses nothing by tipping it out accidentally, because, in any case, if the ball goes out from the shot the throw-in belongs to the opponents. Often a really long reach over the side of the court can be cultivated by practice, and this is useful in obtaining many mis-shots which go over the top of the post. For those which fall in court a good upward jump is the best method of reach, or, if necessary, a whole series of these, and if the ability of the Defences is such that it is difficult to gain possession of the ball, then an endeavour must be made to tip it in the direction of the player who made the shot. If this player receives it before someone else has touched it, she must of course pass, but she may do this to a

Centre and receive the ball again for a shot. It is extremely important for Shooter and Attack to be able to gain possession of the ball by a *one-arm reach*.

Should the throw-in from the goal-line belong to the attacking side and be from behind the circle, the Shooter who is better marked should take it (for fairly obvious reasons) and should endeavour to send the ball to the other Shooter. If this Shooter is well marked, the other course open to the player with the ball is to pass to a Centre player, dash into the circle and receive the ball again from that Centre. The throw-in from other portions of the goal-line should be taken by the Attacking or Defending Centre (according to the side of the court) and should, if possible, be sent direct to a Shooter.

The Shooters should attempt to mark their Defences only as far as the first transverse line which indicates the boundary of the centre court. Beyond this line they will muddle their centres and unsteady themselves for shooting. Only when the centres are tiring and the need for goals is dire should they venture into the centre court, where they are, of course, allowed.

B.—Attacking Centre, Centre, and Defending Centre—and some General Rules of Passing.

The middle Centre has to exercise care with regard to the position of her feet at the

start. According to the Rules, when she holds the ball at the start, one foot must toe the return crease till the ball has left her hands. This is quite simple to accomplish when she sends the pass to Shooter, Attack or Attacking Centre, but when she uses Defending Centre *behind* her, she will find it is useful to bend both knees and step back with the foot which she has decided to move, turning the toe of it outward and externally rotating that hip as much as possible, but leaving most of the weight on the stationary foot. The Centre without the ball should move immediately the whistle is heard and get in a position to mark the Centre with the ball—she may even be able to intercept the first pass if it is a weak one or if she has learnt a great deal about the play of her opponent.

All Centre players need to be as sound at Defence work as they are on the attack ; too often Centres, who are full of keenness and initiative, fail in that vital part of their work—defence play. There is little or no difference in the work of the Centres. If one happens to possess rather more ingenuity and initiative than the other two, then it may be advisable, though not really necessary, to make her middle Centre. All Centres need good staying powers, because they have to work almost without pause throughout the game, their only rests occur when goals are being shot, and when the ball is in one way or another out of play.

While they are attacking and have brought the ball to their opponents' circle, they may be needed, after a mis-shot for goal, to receive a pass before the Shooter attempts a second shot, and, if the opposing Defences obtain the ball, the Centres must quickly mark their opponents. When their own Defences gain possession after a mis-shot by the opponents, the Centres must get quickly away from their circle, in order to be well up the court to receive the ball from the Defences and press a fresh attack. In teams where centres are not encouraged to interchange places with each other, and in all beginners' games, a series of passes will usually be found to follow a zig-zag course from centre to side, back to centre, out to same side, or other side, and so on (*see* Fig. 9). This type of passing can be quite successful as long as the ball is passed very well ahead of the player for whom it is intended, as long as an occasional backward dodge is employed and as long as it does not degenerate into passes which are parallel with the side-lines of the court and hence over the heads of opponents.

Passes in more advanced games usually follow a long line roughly from one corner of the court to its diagonally opposite corner. Supposing the Attacking Centre receives the ball near her own circle, as shown in the diagram, Fig. 10, then the passing should be in such a direction that the two other Centres work in turn out to the left of the

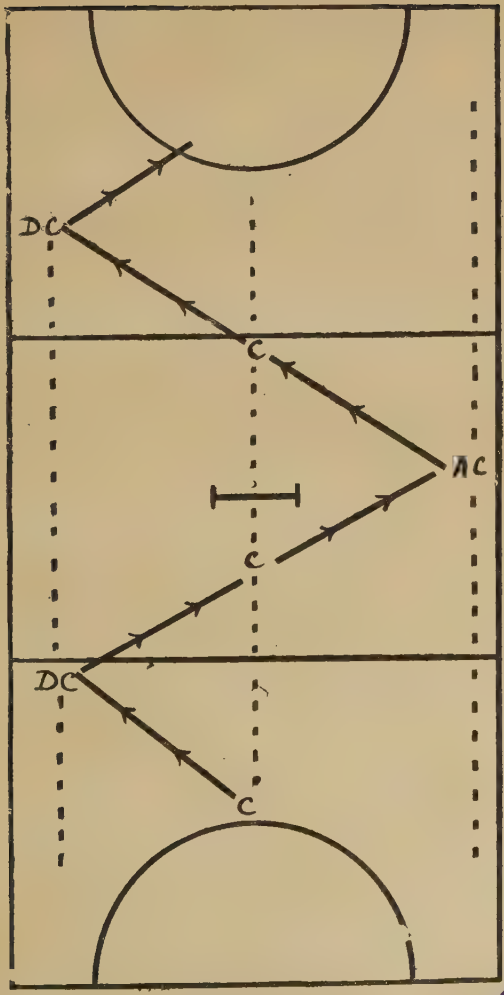

FIGURE 9.

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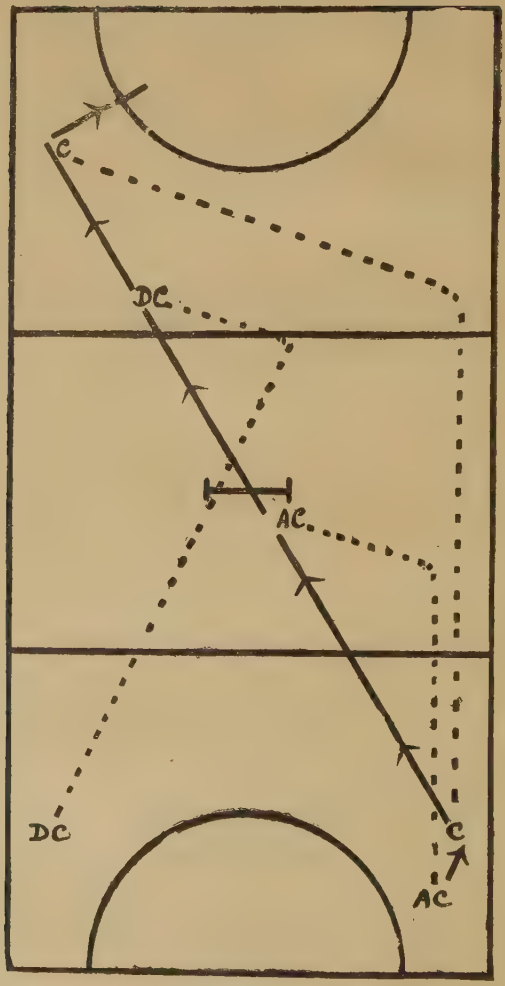

FIGURE 10.

court till the left side-line is reached ; if the ball cannot then be passed into the opponents' circle (as shewn in Fig. 10), the passing must continue in a diagonal line towards the right side of the court. In a diagonal to the left, players will receive the ball on the right hand, and, in a diagonal to the right, the ball must be placed to their left hands.

Certain points must always be remembered in all types of passing.

(1). Centres should always return to their own parts of the court (Attacking Centre R, Defending Centre L, and Middle Centre middle) as soon as possible after any interchange of places.

(2) The player in possession of the ball must hold it until there is no one between herself and the other member of her team to whom she is passing, i.e. there should never be an opponent between the player with the ball and the player to whom she is passing it. Therefore all passes must be sent to the unmarked side of a player—the side *away* from her opponent. This, of course, ensures that all players will endeavour to get free to the side of their opponents, and thus no passes will have to be delivered high over the heads of anybody, and the passing will be kept zig-zag or diagonal as described above, and *not* up and down in lines parallel to the sides of the court.

(3) Players should learn to cover the court and to pass the ball well ahead of the

player dashing to get free in such a way that this member of the team is drawn into a space and thereby encouraged in turn to keep the court covered. *So often one sees all the players crowding into the centre of the court and leaving the sides quite uninhabited ;* the game then becomes congested and much of the joy of it is lost.

(4) Every player must, on passing the ball, instantly be ready to place herself in the best position to receive the ball again, even though she is almost certain that another player is going to be used.

It may be necessary, when the edge of the opponents' circle is reached, to do further passing between the Centres, if the opposing Defences are marking well. This should either be done with a series of short quick passes and a small amount of interchanging of places, or with a high strong pass across the circle, from one side of the court to the other, followed by a very short quick pass into the circle (the latter method cannot be accomplished successfully in a high wind). Hence the Centres must always range themselves round the opponents' circle when an attack is to be made on that goal.

C.—Defence and Goal-keeper (both spoken of as Defences).

The principal aim of these players should be to keep their opponents so effectively marked that they receive no passes while they are inside the circle! This must not

be their only work, however, otherwise their game will become restricted; they must also, whenever they gain possession of the ball, pass with each other about a third of the way up the court and towards the opponents' goal. Undoubtedly good marking is more difficult to accomplish than good passing and can only be effective after much practice. Very few players are born Defences, but many become this after years of constant play. It is necessary, when marking one's opponent, to aim at keeping two objects in view, one, an object which moves at fairly regular intervals, the ball, and the other, in some cases as mobile as the proverbial eel, one's opponent. To attempt this, it is best to look at neither, but to focus the glance somewhere between both; then dodge on the balls of the feet, with knees slightly bent, as near as possible to that opponent without obstructing her in any way, ready at any moment to spring out or up at the ball supposing a pass is sent. It is then far better to gain complete possession of the ball than to tip or bat it, supposing one has played well enough to do any of these things, but one spring may not suffice —a series of springs may often be necessary. In the event of one Defence obtaining the ball successfully, the other Defence must dart *out* of the circle immediately, and a pass should be sent to her as soon as she is safely *outside*. After one more pass between the Defences, the ball should reach one of the Centre players. If that pass to Shooter

or Attack was not intercepted, then the Defences must take up positions near the goal-post ready to try to gain possession of the ball if it is not netted. The Defence marking the player who is shooting should stand about half-way between her and the post and the other Defence should stand almost under the post, slightly to the side further from the player shooting. It is decidedly a disadvantage if a Defence now knocks the ball out of play, therefore, if either touches it, she must endeavour to gain possession, in which case passing up the court takes place as before. If the ball goes over the goal-line out of play off a Shooter, either Defence takes the throw-on, but preferably the faster runner, for after passing the ball to her partner, who darts to the side and *outside* the circle, she herself must run directly forward and up the court to receive the ball again from her partner. This passing is necessary (*a*) to vary the work of the Defences and so make them more capable of dealing with the difficulties of marking, (*b*) to give a slight amount of rest to the Centre players ; it is safe as long as the Defences always dodge free to receive passes *outside* the circle, and as long as it has been practised sufficiently by the Defences for it to happen really speedily. Much care must be exercised over the pass to a Centre player and, after this pass, Defences must return to mark their opponents.

If the ball goes over the circle portion of the goal-line, out of play off a Defence, whoever is marking the Shooter throwing on must guard the corner of the circle on that side of the post from which the throw-on occurs, so that there shall be an additional check on the Centres at that point—the Defence marking the other Shooter simply increases her vigilance over that Shooter.

4. Combination.

A team should, by practice, learn to combine in the various ways already indicated, so that whatever unforeseen circumstances occur, play does not suffer materially and the game remains enjoyable and controlled.

Weather conditions are most warranted to find weak places in a team's combination. If high passing (and especially high slow passing) has been generally practised by a team, a certain amount of wind will do a lot of damage. If a team has become careless about pulling up determinedly on gaining possession of the ball, a court, whether hard or grass, made slippery by rain, will show up this defect instantly. If Shooters have not been accustomed to combining in order to get the best possible shooting results, a dazzling cross-court sun will prove a great handicap.

A team, that is a number of people working together as one, should be adaptable so that differences of conditions, of ground,

and of opponents affect very little the general standard of play, e.g. should the light be dazzling on one side of the circle, some passing between the Shooter and Attack inside the circle may be necessary, so that shots are only attempted by a Shooter with back to the dazzling light. Should the opponents show really good form in defence work, even shorter, quicker, but none the less, careful passing, may have to be adopted with even more interchanging of places than usual.

The opponents' tactics and methods should be studied and play adapted to meet these, but in no instance should a team ever allow the standard of its play to be *lowered* by that of its opponents: roughness on the part of one team is NEVER an excuse for similar bad form on the part of the other.

5. Absence of Weak Places.

When only seven players make up one side in a game, it is obvious that each one will be needed to do quite a great deal of work. Now, most people are aware that it is comparatively difficult to find seven people with identical capabilities, and when some clubs number under twenty players, it is quite possible that a few may show, at any rate at first sight, greater skill than others. This is no reason for their monopolising the play either in practices or in matches; of course they will find it much more difficult

to do all the work in matches, and the other members of the team, lacking practice, will not be able suddenly to come to their assistance. Almost every player who is keen enough to play regularly will be found to have a most distinct use in a team, and each player's particular capabilities should be noted and developed, especially in club games. There are few sights on a winter Saturday afternoon so desolate as that of the Net Ball team consisting of six players, plus another who appears on the court arrayed uniformly with the six, but in all other respects is a spectator. The fault is not hers ; the mistake lies with the six who imagine, quite erroneously, that they can do the work of seven, and so fail to use one whole seventh of their number.

6. Variety of Tactics.

The tactics mentioned in this book are few, and merely suggestions from which clubs may develop their own individual ideas.

A game which is played on a court as small as a Net Ball court is capable of no end of development by people with ingenuity and resource. When one has to consider only seven players as a team, it is possible to plan moves for these players when one is nowhere near a court, or posts, or ball, in fact it is an extraordinarily absorbing occupation when one is not particularly interested in one's newspaper, book or fellow-travellers in coach, carriage, tube, 'bus, or tram.

The more variety of moves and methods one is able to produce in this game of Net Ball, the more interesting it is going to make it for all—leaders and led, players and spectators.

If players of to-day will make it their aim while endeavouring to produce teams of seven who act as one, to keep all opposing teams guessing as to what will happen next during several minutes of the 30 (or 40) which constitute a match, then it is safe to predict that the game will develop quite as much during the next twenty years as it has done in the past twenty years.

7. Absence of Excitability. Good Staying Powers and Determination.

Fortunately the Net Ball player who loses her sense of proportion (sometimes referred to as her "head") in moments of stress is far less often seen now than formerly, but she is not extinct. The atmosphere of a good team should be such that all members of the club should realise that if they tend to act blindly at difficult moments during play, then they must take themselves in hand and gain some control before they appear at large as members of that club. Loss of control means loss of form, loss of form means careless, possibly rough play, and careless play lowers the prestige of a club sooner or later.

There is no doubt that a team equipped

with good physical staying powers is far less likely to show signs of excitability than a team that tires soon. It is possible to develop these staying powers by a fairly simple daily training, but exercise *must* be taken daily. Exercise in running at a pace about twice that of a jog-trot is useful ; a small amount (not more than 200 yards) the first day should be increased gradually till half a mile is accomplished. When this is reached, it should not be exceeded, but the last 100 yards should be done at a sprint. If weather makes running impossible, skipping is exceedingly useful, and a combined training of skipping and running is most effective.

Sometimes a team which has poor staying powers will, instead of increasing these by training, endeavour to keep up through the most strenuous game by sheer determination. Used in this way, determination is definitely harmful to the individuals, though combined with staying power it is a great asset and will successfully pull a team through many a difficult time. The condition of a team after a stiff game should be noted by the captain, who can do much to help over-enthusiastic members.

CHAPTER V

QUALITIES OF THE BEST KIND OF CLUB

The full enjoyment of Net Ball, as of all other games, consists in getting from it the best exercise and the best possible team spirit ; it will then follow that in matches all opponents and even umpires will enjoy their games too. That the game must never be forgotten, even if a trophy is at stake, is one of the most important traditions for a club to adopt.

Delight in exercise is much more acute if mind and body are thoroughly under control. This control must function equally upon muscular activity and personal feelings, so that a team remain just as good company and just as good players whether they lose or win. Although " team " is mentioned here, the responsibility rests with the club. Naturally it is easier to exercise control if one is feeling at the top of one's form, and it is really not entirely fair to one's team to attempt to play matches when one is enough out of form to feel that it is an effort to move about. It is not out of place to mention again here that Net Ball players must keep as fit as possible. Even though changing room accommodation is not often all that it

might be, one's change after a hard game should include the garment which has been worn next to the skin. A quick rub down with a fairly rough towel is an excellent substitute for a bath or shower if none is available. It is so easy to get slack about these necessities, and the resulting colds, chills, etc., are so difficult to lose. Much can be done by example over this matter. One club, with energetic and purposeful members, can often do much to improve the standard of changing room accommodation of a whole district.

It can similarly set the fashion about changing until thoroughness in this direction becomes " the done thing."

Senior members of clubs should accept quite an amount of responsibility with regard to the smooth working of the club and its general efficiency. They should make it their business to help younger and weaker members of the club and coach them if necessary. In addition they should interest themselves in umpiring and continue to practise quite consistently while they are players. It is difficult work, but like most difficult things it is thoroughly worth while doing, especially as it helps other players to get keen enjoyment out of their games.

Clubs must remain alert to the possibility that little mistakes of one kind or another may creep into their bearing or even into their play. Some people seem to make almost a habit of being unpunctual ; here

the naturally punctual people must help the other members who are not blessed with much conscience on the point; so often a match which was spoilt by the oncome of heavy rain, could have been finished in dry weather if only all fourteen players had been ready to begin at the time stated in the challenge.

Then the most humble member of every club must remember that her opponents (on her own ground) are always her guests, and she must therefore observe all the little courtesies which are their due. While she is representing her club, even though she may only be handing round lemons (or is it concentrated vitamin B now?) at half-time, or seeing off her own team to an "away" match, she must uphold the very best traditions of her club.

Neatness of dress must be studied and the most serviceable and comfortable garments selected for the club's uniform. In Net Ball, it is most helpful to have distinguishing colours as part of the tunic, dress or jumper and unnecessary to trouble about coloured stockings as in Hockey. Materials used for the uniform should ideally be washable and not too light in colour or weight.

If jumpers and knickers are worn, it is neater if knickers are black and therefore match stockings in colour; in fact knickers should always be either black or dark navy. For play on hard courts, crêpe rubber shoes will be found to be very service-

able, especially if they are made with calf or glacé leather uppers and a welt, though never a heel. Certain kinds of crêpe rubber offer a grip even on wet surfaces, but owners of the kinds which become intensely slippery should provide themselves with ordinary plimsoles for emergencies. Lacrosse boots offer a certain amount of grip on a very soft grass court, though even these occasionally become clogged with mud to such an extent that by the end of a game they are no longer of much assistance. In fact there remains only one piece of advice to give to clubs that play on grass pitches throughout the winter —endeavour to get these converted into hard courts before next season !

Clubs should keep their courts and all their apparatus in the best possible condition. They should possess extra balls for practice purposes, in fact they should not feel satisfied with their apparatus until they possess at least six balls in good condition. This also applies to schools, and in many of these a larger number will be needed. A useful rack for schools and one which will hold Net Balls, Hockey sticks and, in summer, Tennis racquets can easily be fitted up by a carpenter or builder ; it consists of a wooden shelf about 10 inches broad, in which holes 5 inches in diameter are cut about 4 inches apart. This shelf is placed at the level of $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet from the ground. Ten to twelve inches below the shelf and attached to a wood fixture projecting 5 inches from the wall are

fixed spring clips, which can be purchased from any sports dealer—one clip directly beneath each hole, and as many more between these as possible. Into these clips will fit the handles of Hockey sticks, blades of which will rest on the floor. In winter Net Balls can rest in the holes, and in summer Tennis racquets can rest in the holes and be held in position by the clips beneath. If several girls possess their own Net Balls, a second shelf can be placed above the first, but it must be sufficiently high to allow room for racquets to project above the first shelf.

Clubs should always provide one umpire for every one of their teams which is playing a match, whether at home or away, and they should make it a rule to watch matches, both their own and also matches between any two good teams in the neighbourhood.

Every club, therefore, must aim at putting up such a good game and producing such pleasant members that each other club it meets leaves them feeling they would like to play far more than the recognised number of matches per season against these good sportswomen—a feeling which will not exist if too much attention is paid to match results—a record of unbeaten teams is not always indicative of an excellent club—very occasionally, unfortunately, quite the reverse.

Ordinary inter-club, non-tournament (or non-league) matches are by far the most enjoyable ones in which to play, and all

members of a club should be given sufficient of these. Nowadays there is a tendency to crowd club practice games almost entirely out of the programme ; this seems to be an intolerable state of affairs, and clubs that find it happening must quickly remedy the evil by arranging a smaller number of matches the following season—a club cannot hope to improve without times for thorough practice. Every club should aim at producing at least two teams (1st and 2nd) and should appoint a small selection committee whose business it is to place members into teams. These teams should not be of too set a character, as it is a mistake not to be able to give players who show great promise in 2nd team games a fair trial in their 1st team ; similarly it should be perfectly possible for even the newest member to earn a place in the team if her play justifies this. Interest is stimulated in this way and keenness increased—members who have recently joined the club feel that there is some real point in making efforts to improve their game if in so doing they will gain the honour of playing for their club.

CHAPTER VI

TECHNIQUE FOR THROWING, RECEIVING, DODGING AND SHOOTING

1. Throwing.

Some methods of playing the ball.

(1) Push from shoulder—most usual method of playing the ball. The ball is supported against the palm and fingers of the right (for most players) hand with the left ; right elbow is bent and right hand near shoulder level—the left (supporting) hand is withdrawn as the right elbow, wrist and fingers straighten to propel the ball forward (and a variable amount upward) with a straight push from the shoulder. Meantime the left foot is placed forward, or, if this had previously been done, the weight is transferred on to the left foot. The ball can travel from this pass either in a direct line from shoulder level of the passer to shoulder level of the receiver, or can become quite a high drop-pass (useful in reaching Shooter and Attack) according to the angle of the propelling hand and elbow.

(2) Same as (1), but the back elbow protrudes further backward and the ball is held, before propulsion, near waist level. This

pass must of necessity be short—it has a low projectile, and is therefore more difficult to catch and easier to intercept, but useful, because when it is used correctly the ball travels swiftly and by the shortest route.

(3) Toss-pass, most useful when controlled by one hand; controlling hand, which is below the ball, propels the ball upward and onward with only a slight amount of force. This is useful when only a short pass is necessary, the player giving the pass wishing to get into a new position to receive again as quckly as possible. This pass necessitates practically no follow-through of weight, and it is therefore very easy to leave the mark in any direction after giving it. This pass can easily be intercepted if used for anything but short distances.

Naturally all three passes can be varied in strength through quite a considerable range, and the difficulty of interception of Nos. 1 and 2 can be increased by the amount of "kick" or twist given to the ball by the wrist and hand in propulsion. So many beginners (and unfortunately others too) affect the long high kind of pass which has no particular aim or direction, and some still use the "soccer" throw-on (elbows straight, ball in both hands high above head). Loose passing is poor and detracts from the enjoyment of the game. Long passing should be used only occasionally, and then it should be swift and strong.

Every pass should be designed to reach one particular player, and only one, and every move in the game must have some very definite aim.

2. Receiving.

Opinions vary very much as to whether or not any definite method of receiving the ball should be advised. As it is generally advocated that the ball should be obtained from a pass at the first possible moment, and as it follows that if a jump is made forward or upward the player will reach the ball slightly sooner than if she had merely stretched for it, the jumping method of receiving seems to possess advantages. If the jump can be practised until it is neat and controlled, then it is useful for defending as well as attacking. Of course the essence of effective receiving is sufficient arm and body "give" or recoil—often players endeavour to catch the ball with fingers, wrists, etc., almost rigid. This happens particularly with beginners or at the opening games of the season and can soon be overcome.

3. Dodging.

This must be done with weight on the balls of the feet. It is often only necessary in mid-court play to dodge once (sometimes no dodge at all is needed) and then run free in the opposite direction, thus, dodge to left

and make as though about to run that way, but signal and actually run to the right. This signal is a most important part of play and should be quite distinct to one's own side, but in no way obvious to one's immediate opponent. Therefore calling out or clapping, as signals that players are free, should be abandoned, because they usually help opponents far more than one's own side. The arms, used singly, can be employed without giving away one's position, especially if the signal is made rather low, and not, as is the habit of very young players, with waving arms at head height or above.

If a quick run towards the opponents' goal has been made in an effort to get free, a sudden pull up is very effective. This "backward dodge" must not be confused with "backward passing," which retards the game and is mentioned on pages 10 and 13.

In the circle, where the area in which the players wish to get unmarked is much more restricted, it is sometimes necessary to dodge three, four, or even more times, to throw off the defence before the dash to get free can be made. This is best done by changing the weight from one foot to the other and using at the same time a fair amount of side bending at the waist; this method will be found to be less exhausting than running a few steps from side to side and will leave the player more steady for her shot.

4. Shooting.

It is rarely necessary to give advice as to the method to adopt for successful shooting; each individual must practise until she finds out which particular stance, grasp of the ball and action for shot come most naturally to her. Once found, this method of shot should be maintained, so that it becomes automatic and all powers of the player can then be concentrated on direction, distance and any outside interferences such as wind. In only a few cases is it wise to attempt to coach the player into using another method.

The varieties of stance are roughly (1) with feet together, (2) with one foot supported forward on the toe, (3) with one foot supported backward on the toe. In each instance, the preparation for the shot is made by bending knees and ankles; this is simultaneous with bending of elbows, wrists and slight lowering of the upper-arms. As the ball is propelled towards the goal by the straightening of the arms, the knees and ankles also become straight and the follow-through often takes the form of a jump.

In schools, one style of shooting often persists throughout; this is, of course, due to the fact that younger players copy the methods of those who are older and better experienced than themselves. Faults in shooting which can be corrected are:—(1) lack of twist or spin on the ball, either in a side-to-side, or front-and-back direction—

this spin on the ball is especially useful for scoring when the ball does not pitch directly down through the ring and net, but touches some part of the ring; (2) lack of aim, due usually to the preparatory arm-movement being executed too far to the side, and thus not near enough to the line of vision; (3) unsteady grip, due to a one-arm action—the supporting hand is to be encouraged in shooting as in passing; (4) too much preliminary action, which results in the ball being held longer than three seconds—a Shooter should take up her position and play her shot with as little fidgeting as possible to avoid wasting any of the precious three seconds to which she is entitled; (5) careless foot-work, which results in a step being taken either before the shot is made or during the shooting action (a leg action, which at all resembles a skip, is almost always faulty and is consequently to be avoided).

CHAPTER VII

POINTS ABOUT PENALTIES AND AWARDS

1. The Free Throw for Goal.

A.—How to Take it.

When one bears in mind the fact that the goal-ring projects 6 inches from the post, it is evident that a high shot for goal taken from the side of the circle and passing over the ring will fall into the court, whereas a similar shot from nearer the middle of the arc of the circle would fall outside the court. In the former instance both sides have equal chances of securing the ball, while in the latter the defending side has unchallenged right to the throw-in. Hence it is advisable to take free throws for goal from the sides of the circle, i.e. near the goal-line of the court. The other Shooter then places herself in as advantageous a position as possible on the far side of the post from the player with the ball and behind the goal-line. If the ball falls short, the player who sent it has a slight chance of getting it if she follows up her shot ; if it passes over the ring the other Shooter stands an excellent chance of obtaining it if she jumps into the court, reaching for the ball as she does so.

B.—How to Defend it.

Supposing the Shooters follow the above tactics, the Defence opposing the player with the ball should stand three yards from the edge of the circle and behind the goal-line. This Defence will stand an excellent chance of securing the ball after a mis-shot which falls short. The second Defence will mark the other Shooter on the far side of the post, but will not have as much chance of gaining possession of the ball as this Shooter, because she will not know the habits of the player taking the shot, nor yet the rhythm of her action and pace of her ball. (*See* Fig. 11.)

Supposing the Shooters do not follow the tactics suggested above, the Defences must place themselves in as advantageous positions as possible for the free throw for goal, but always outside the circle (Rule 21) and always with one Defence behind the goal-line near the post, partly to be ready for mis-shots which drop fairly straight to the ground, and partly to be ready to take the throw-in if such is the result of the Shooter's effort.

2. The Free Pass.

The great point in taking a free pass is to take up one's position for it as soon as possible after its award and to get the ball passed and away towards the opponents' goal before one's opponents are properly on guard. To do this effectively the entire

team must be ready for the move ; so often the advantage is lost by one player remaining sluggish. If the free pass is taken thus actively, it is very difficult indeed for the side which was guilty of infringement to put up much of a defence.

If the award is given for infringement in the circle, the pass must be taken by a player allowed in the circle ; otherwise the Centre player nearest (when the whistle blows) to the spot where the breach of rule occurred takes possession.

3. The Bounce. (*Rule* 18.)

Though it is primarily the business of umpires to know whether players standing ready to have the ball bounced between them are the correct distance apart, it is pleasant for umpires if they occasionally meet players who can gauge this distance for themselves. Then it is a distinct disadvantage to be on the wrong side for the bounce, and umpires will not always be on the look-out to correct players in this ; they must therefore see for themselves that they are standing with left side towards goal which they are attacking. They must be upright, but they should practise a stance which enables them to get forward and off the mark soon enough to reach the ball before their opponent. Some players endeavour to bounce the ball towards them from the bounce (supposing it does not rise too high) and others endeavour to get

FIGURE 11.
Positions for Free Throw for goal.

both hands on to it. The former method seems a little quicker for low balls, but nothing except jumping is much use to obtain possession of a high bounce.

The vigilance of all other players has to be rather more intent than usual, because they are often kept guessing for some time as to which side will gain possession first. It is sufficient for just one other couple of players to be near the bounce. If the bounce occurs in the circle, the Attack (or Shooter) taking part in it must give a swift glance to ascertain the positions of her Centres as she takes up her own position, for she may, in the event of gaining possession of the ball, need to pass it to a Centre if her circle partner is thoroughly marked.

4. The Throw-in. (*Rule* 19.)

A.—From Goal-line by Defending Side.

Whether the ball go over the circle portion of the goal-line or the parts on either side of the circle off an attacker, it is better thrown in by Goal-keeper or Defence, who, having practised the passing described on page 36, will be able to get the ball well into the centre court without much trouble. The Shooters should not attempt to mark these players beyond the attacking court line, and should omit to do even this much defence work if they are tiring. The Shooters should, however, make most strenuous efforts to obtain the initial throw-in.

B.—From Goal-line by Attacking Side.

If the ball goes over the circle portion of the goal-line off a Defence, either Goal-shooter or Attack must take the throw-in. Her partner will probably be well marked, and in most cases she will find that she has to pass to a Centre and receive the ball again herself. But she should not allow herself to get into the habit of doing this, because it is far better play to get goal in one pass, and this can be done by using the other circle player. The Defence opposing the Shooter who takes the throw-in (and it may be either Goal-shooter or Attack who does this) must be exceedingly watchful of the corner of the circle; she must keep three yards away from that Shooter, but she need not let her pass the ball to one of the Centres without making a very vigorous struggle for it. Should the Shooter manage to elude her and pass to a Centre, then Defence must quickly close up on the Shooter to mark her before the Centre can return the ball to her.

If the ball goes over the portions of the goal-line on either side of the circle off one of the defending side, Attacking Centre or Defending Centre of the side attacking should take the throw-in, because she will have the choice of two circle players to whom to give a direct pass, whereas if one of the Shooters takes the throw-in, only one circle player remains for the direct pass and subsequent shot for goal.

C.—From the Side-lines.

It is most useful for a side Centre (Attacking or Defending Centre) to take the throw-in from the side-line, because many teams use the middle Centre as a kind of pivot for their interchanging, therefore it is unwise to put this player temporarily off the court. Of course if she happens to have run off just at the time when the throw-in is awarded to her side, or if she is considerably nearer the spot than any other member of her side, it would save time for her to take the throw-in. It is always an advantage to take the throw-in as soon as possible ; the longer time a player dawdles over taking her stance at the line, the longer time the opposite side is allowed in which to mark up their opponents. When the ball passes over the side-line fairly close to a goal-line and the throw-in is awarded to the side defending that goal, it is an advantage for Goal-keeper or Defence to take the ball, especially if they have practised their passing together.

Though a player while throwing in " must *stand* with both feet behind the line," she must be able to get off the mark immediately the ball has left her hands. To enable her to do this, she should stand with feet separated, knees and ankles slightly flexed and weight inclined towards the direction in which she means to run.

Although it is quite courteous to fetch the ball which has rolled some distance from the

court for an opponent to throw on, it is just foolish to pass the ball to her when one is still some distance from the line on the return journey. She will probably have passed it into play by the time one is again on the court, and one has missed the chance not only of intercepting the throw-in, but also of marking one's opponent for the subsequent several seconds.

CHAPTER VIII

GENERAL HINTS ON PASSING

THOUGH the following points are in some instances reiterations of what has already been said, especially in Chapter IV, 3, *B*, page 33, and though it will be quite unnecessary for some players to peruse them, there have been known to be others who need reminders such as these, not twice in one small book, but twice in one brief minute, and as authentic information that this species of player is now extinct is not yet to hand, these hints have been included.

(1) At the start of both halves of the game and after each goal, it is far easier to get away quickly at the whistle if an easy position with knees bent, ankles bent and feet slightly apart has been assumed beforehand in preference to a stiffly erect position.

(2) It is not necessary to stare at a player in order to ascertain her position prior to passing her the ball, in fact by doing this one makes it far more simple for her opponent to mark her. One should practise taking in the relative positions of players at a glance, yet look at no one player in particular ; then pass the ball as soon as possible to the player who is free and in the most advan-

tageous position—there is nothing quite so tiring in Net Ball as having to get free twice or even three times before the player with the ball will pass it.

(3) Another method of putting opponents off guard is feint-passing, i.e. making all the action for passing in one direction, but retaining the ball and in reality passing somewhere quite different. Beginners must avoid taking their hands off the ball in the feinting movement (penalty, a free pass to the opposite side), and must not keep it in the hands longer than three seconds (penalty, a free pass to the opposite side).

(4) Interchanging of Centres during the passing of the ball from one end of the court to the other is a tactic to which every team should advance, but it should not be attempted until every player has quite a sound knowledge of the game. In schools it can quite well be attempted with girls of 13 years of age and over.

(5) When interchanging of Centres is well established, receiving signals are not nearly so much used. They should be practised nevertheless, for they may be needed at any time when players find themselves up against opponents whose powers of marking are great. These signals should never be obvious to the opposing side.

(6) Crowding on the ball is a bad habit at all times, and though it more often occurs in teams of beginners, yet a mild form of it is all too frequent an accident amongst regular

players. Too often the sides of the court are left untenanted while at least ten people make the middle of the court into a congested area. If players would only realise the importance of passing only when there is no opponent between the thrower and the receiver, they would tend more and more to utilise the sides of the court rather more than the middle.

(7) When the ball could with some effort be saved from going over the side or end line, it should be kept in play if this can be done without loss of control. So often, however, one sees a player dash out of court batting the ball backwards into court as she goes ; this manœuvre is pointless unless she is quite certain there is a member of her own side ready to take up this batted pass—in most cases the result is a scramble by two opponents to gain possession of a grounded ball. The Shooter or Attack should, as already mentioned, do all in her power to keep the ball in play after a mis-shot by her partner, because she stands to lose nothing by tipping it out while making the attempt, though she will gain a good deal (probably a goal) if her attempt is successful.

(8) Players and also umpires occasionally need the reminder that ingenuity does not necessarily involve a breach of fair play. Players when they meet some rather strange tactic in use among opponents are apt to search for something in the book of rules which disallows such a practice. Even

umpires occasionally appear to think along the lines that if a piece of play looks odd or peculiar then it must be wrong. The more thought that can be put into tactics, the more effective will be those tactics, and headwork should find a place not only in working up play out of the game, but in sizing up others' play during the game and anticipating all moves of the game.

(9) A pass must always be sent to the unmarked side of the player for whom it is intended, and sufficiently far in advance of her to allow for the ground she will cover during the passage of the ball from thrower to receiver. This space must be over-estimated rather than under-estimated, and the pace of the ball must be carefully considered—it must not be so fast that it arrives before the player; on the other hand, too slow a pace makes interception by the opponent an easy matter.

(10) Backward passes waste time and should therefore be used only in cases of emergency, i.e. when it is quite impossible to get rid of the ball within three seconds of catching it to a player nearer the opponents' goal than one is oneself. Backward dodging, on the other hand, is extremely useful, especially for beginners and teams who have not perfected the practice of interchanging.

(11) It is so much more pleasant to play against a team that does not call out, clap hands, snap fingers or otherwise make noises to indicate freedom to receive passes. As

sounds such as these give away the position of a player so that her opponent is better able to mark her, they will readily be dropped by most teams as soon as the futility of them is fully realised.

(12) Net Ball is a game in which the ball should be kept off the ground as much as possible, therefore it should not be allowed to bounce before it is caught, in fact bounces should be avoided—they tend to produce bad habits and are usually a sign of slackness on the part of players. Only when a player has been forced into an upright position (as is essential at the bounce by the umpire between two opponents—Rule 18), is it really necessary sometimes to bounce the ball to gain possession of it ; in most other cases a little more give of the body, legs, etc., will do all, and probably more than a bounce would do.

CHAPTER IX

CHOICE OF POSITION AND SELECTION WORK

Captains should guard against players in their clubs getting stale by playing always in the same position. It is a good plan to make players draw for places occasionally, and often one or even two will find they have distinct aptitude for different places and will then probably be ready to play in either the old or the new position. Players should play against as many different people as possible in the club; frequently the best defence player is put to play against the best shooter at every practice until each knows the other's play too thoroughly well for either to get much enjoyment out of the game.

If new players in clubs have no definite views as to where they wish to play, it is well to play them a few times in each of three places—Defence, Attacking Centre, Shooter. When children first take part in a Net Ball game they have usually played various games which lead up to it and have, in addition, had opportunities of handling a ball for shooting. It is advisable then to let them remain in the place selected either by them or their coach for as long as half a term;

then a change should be made for the second half of the term, and a third change for the first half of the next term (supposing the child began play in September); during the second half of the Spring term, she can play either in the place of her choice or, if she has none, in the place in which the coach feels she will make most progress.

It is impossible to tell on sight what position a player should fill on a Net Ball side; for instance it is really absurd to assume that all tall players will be Defences —often they are really weak at jumping and are not necessarily good at marking.

A left-handed beginner, if she wishes to play in the centre court, should be placed as a Defence Centre until she has learnt to control the ball with either hand, similarly a right-handed centre beginner should be placed as Attack Centre.

In arranging players in games for trials which are to be judged by an external selector, captains should endeavour to put players of more or less the same standard together in each game, separating players who have played together (i.e. in the same court, e.g., two Attacks, Centres, two Defences; an Attacking Centre and Defence from the same team can perfectly well play on the same side for trials, but an Attacking Centre and Centre from the same team should be on different sides) unless asked to do otherwise by the selector. When a composite team is to be chosen from

a number of good clubs, it is sometimes arranged that the first team of each club is present intact and plays as a team against another entire team. Then the selector is able to see each player to the best possible advantage, for she is playing with six others whose play she knows and who know her play. Of course selection under these conditions is a very lengthy process, and it is questionable whether it is easier by this method to arrive at a more just conclusion and therefore a stronger composite team. In either case the same points must be noted about each individual—how good does her individual play appear to be? How strong is her opponent, and therefore is any show she is making due to lack of strength against her? How well does she work in with other members of her side? Is she able to do equally well in all branches of her work? (e.g. Shooters :—getting free, shooting; Centres :—attacking, marking; Defences :—marking, passing together). It will often be found advisable, if a very good centre combination exists in one team, to take all three players rather than three good players from three separate clubs. This will depend mostly on how many practices the composite team will be able to get when selected; if few, then it will be as well to put in an existing centre combination; if many, there may be sufficient time for three good individual players to work up a combination.

CHAPTER X

UMPIRING

The methods of recognising the various fouls and legislating for them have already been described in "Hints to Umpires," published by the All-England Women's Net Ball Association, but there are a few details relative to the main principle underlying the umpiring of all games, and these might quite usefully be mentioned here.

All umpires should have clearly before them the idea that they are there to see that all goes well with the game and they are not there to pick holes in the play of any team or player. An umpire blows her whistle for an infringement of a rule, not because she likes to hear the sound of her whistle, nor yet because she enjoys awarding free shots or free passes, but because by one team's infringement the rights of the opposing team have been imposed upon. Fair play is due to everybody, and the smooth running and enjoyment of a game is largely in the hands of the umpire of that game. This, then, roughly defines the principle on which good umpiring is based. Supposing there are two umpires for a match, these should meet just before the game is due to begin, and decide

who is blowing the whistle for the start; agree that each blows for the centre pass after a goal scored her end of the court; agree as to which shall be finally responsible for seeing that the centre pass is taken correctly (alternately except in the case of a breach of the rule); agree as to who shall keep time; and finally agree to agree! It is vitally important that two umpires on one court should function in harmony. If one finds herself disagreeing inwardly with the decisions of the other (and this can and does happen sometimes) she should discuss the point or points with the other umpire at half-time, when she will probably be able to straighten out any doubts and difficulties. The question of the score is sometimes a matter for argument, though it never should be so. It is a perfectly simple matter for the home team to provide a small blackboard, chalk and a duster; the score can then be kept on this board by a spectator and the umpires need then only check this and be certain that every goal scored is marked up. If this is not provided, the score should be said aloud after each goal by the umpire in whose half it occurs. If the other umpire disagrees, she must say so instantly.

It states clearly in Rule 23 of the Rules of Net Ball how two umpires shall share the ground, but even so mistakes are sometimes made; the half of the ground for which one is responsible is a square bounded by goal-

line, half a side-line, an imaginary line drawn through the centre 3 yards line and terminated at either end by the side-lines with which it would make right angles, and half the other side-line ; this same umpire is also responsible for the whole of one side-line. She must follow the game as it moves up and down the court, but she must keep outside the limits of the court except when it is necessary for her to bounce the ball between two players ; she will find that her path will be L-shaped—the upright of the L representing half of the side-line (for which she is wholly responsible) and the bottom of the L representing half the goal-line (for which she is wholly responsible), and therefore only half the former distance.

Supposing, as unfortunately is only too frequent in club matches, one umpire has to function for the whole court, she must employ a spectator to assist in deciding to whom belong balls which are sent over one side-line while she herself follows the game up and down the other side-line and part way along both goal-lines.

An umpire should never blow her whistle without a brief explanation of her reason for so doing, or without saying what the next procedure is going to be—sometimes the latter alone is sufficient, e.g. if she blows for the ball being out of play over goal or side-lines it is obvious that " Oxmouth on " or " Redtree on " is all that is required. If a rule has been broken, however, this should be

stated and the penalty named, e.g. " Running with the ball—free pass Redtree "; or " Charging—free throw for goal Oxmouth." If at any time an umpire thinks a player is fouling, but is not absolutely sure about it, the best course open to her is to tell the player that this is the case.

When a player persistently breaks the same rule, she obviously has not understood it; it is then the duty of the umpire to go into a fuller explanation of that player's mistake with her personally, so that she sees really clearly why she is being penalised.

The need for more and better umpires is most urgent at present and, while so few clubs are in a position to have coaches, good umpiring is one of the few means of improving the general standard of play—so come forward would-be umpires, and put some thorough work into this interesting occupation—never forgetting that when you are thus in authority you must uphold the best traditions of the game, gain complete confidence of the players by your just decisions, and make the game a better thing for your being there.

CHAPTER XI

THE GAME IN SCHOOLS

It seems scarcely necessary to mention in these days of games (playground and indoor) carefully graded to prepare children for games such as Net Ball, that it is a great mistake to allow children to attempt a real game of Net Ball until they are thoroughly familiar with throwing and catching footballs in various ways and have learnt, through their preparatory games, something about stance and poise. Still, perhaps it is just as well to state the fact once.

At first, little stress need be laid on names of places, but when the children have been told where to stand on the court, it is helpful to send them out of those places and into them again about twice before beginning play. The only rule which need be taught is the one concerning running with the ball, and then, of course, no details must be given. Children will probably have seen older members of the school playing and, even if this opportunity has not fallen to their lot, it will seldom occur to them to pull the ball away from another player; if this takes place, then the rule about it must also be mentioned.

Children should be encouraged from the beginning to keep up with the game without keeping close to the ball. The tendency is, at first, never to move from the wonderful sounding places so recently acquired. Next comes the phase when all the players dash madly to the spot where the ball is or call out loudly (while edging nearer and nearer with arms upraised to the player with the ball), beseeching the possesser of the ball to bestow a pass. Sometimes it may be necessary to chalk out two longitudinal lines on the court, and thus make tracks for the three Centres, and in any case it is always advisable to limit the movements of Defences and Shooters to half the court instead of two-thirds of it, and coaches should strenuously insist on absence of talking while playing—when there is so much to be learnt, the coach must needs talk without ceasing, so for the players' sakes as well as her own, silence on their part is essential.

It will be found helpful to invent a few rules for beginners, especially if they are apt to be careless and wild. A rule penalising the side which drops a catch is quite useful, as are also others dealing with passes sent to the opposite side, etc.

Even when the game is taking real shape, preparatory games to improve the technique of throwing and catching (particularly left and right arm reach), dodging, turning on the run, getting quickly off the mark, must not be neglected, and occasional bouts

of rhythmical passing are invaluable if players show signs of getting stiff, jerky or hesitating in their movements.

Extra rings put up round the sides of the court at the correct height for shooting provide means for much shooting practice in odd moments. Charts of Shooters' shots and misses, both in individual practice time and during games and matches, are an incentive to careful shooting. On these will appear the names of all girls who show promise as shooters, and not just those who are placed in teams.

Charts recording daily practice in running or skipping or both will assist in keeping players in training till regular use of these aids to training becomes habitual and they are practised daily as a matter of course.

Coaches should umpire quite strictly all practice games except those in which beginners take part, and if any players (especially Defences) are thought to be body-fouling, the coach herself should play against them all in turn to test their play. Body-fouling is due to faulty or slack foot-work, and can easily be eradicated when a player is young.

All members of clubs and schools, who have patiently read thus far, will here encounter a piece of advice on which they must act promptly, as promptly as they obey the whistle during play. If their club or school has not already affiliated to the All-England

Women's Net Ball Association, either direct or through a county or league, they must make themselves responsible for seeing that something is done about the matter. Supposing that their county does not possess a county Net Ball Association, they must take steps to organise one. The game is gaining adherents more rapidly than ever before—this pace is not likely to diminish—several county organisations are in being under the auspices of the All-England Association, and three territorial Associations have been formed, but there is much work to be done in this direction during the next few years in order that the game may attain the status which it deserves.

Now is the moment for energetic club members to do all that is within their power to put forward the claims of Net Ball. Information, assistance and details of affiliation may be obtained from the Honorary Secretary of the All-England Women's Net Ball Association, 36, Reservoir Road, London, S.E. 4. Particulars of tests for the All-England Panel of Umpires may be obtained from Miss K. Foster, 75, Burbage Road, Herne Hill, London, S.E. 24.

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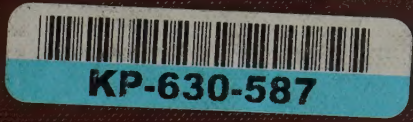
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